Chapter 10. *'Things can only get better?'* - transitioning from planning student to planner in the England of the 1990s and 2000s

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10.1 Introduction and context

This chapter considers experiences of the move from planning education to planning practice in the context of England in the late 1990s and the 2000s. Specifically it focuses on the transition from student to planner of a small group of young planners who graduated in the period from around 1997 to 2007. This was a generation who started their planning education following eighteen years of Conservative rule and the beginning of the New Labour 'era' under the premiership of Tony Blair. The latter promised to modernise and revive British society with its brand of 'Third Way' politics melded from social democratic and liberal principles (Giddens, 2010). The late 1990s was a period of political change and it would probably be fair to say optimism in the UK/English context. The sense of revival was not just political and economic[2] but also cultural. The Labour Party's theme song in the 1997 election had been a song called 'Things Can Only Get Better'[3] (Maconie, 2013), capturing the sense that a new generation had risen to power, familiar and comfortable with Britain as a producer of popular cultural products and as with a more open and indeed European state.

Following the arrival in power of Tony Blair the front page of the *Observer* newspaper ran an article titled 'Goodbye Xenophobia' which reported that the new Foreign Secretary Robin Cook would pursue 'constructive engagement' with Europe and that Britain would take its "*rightful place as one of Europe's Big Three within the European Union in order to launch a new international framework ranging from better global economic co-operation to the promotion of human rights*" (Hutton & Wintour, 1997). Meanwhile, the phenomenon of 'Britpop' which saw English bands like Oasis, or Blur, poised to achieve global success (notably in the USA) held out – the prospect of a rerun of the 1960s for young Britons born in the economically lean years of the 1970s and early 1980s. A front cover of the magazine *Vanity Fair* proclaimed 'London Swings Again', whilst the media slogan of 'Cool Britannia' was quickly appropriated by a new class of politicians who tried by association with the stars of the new British entertainment and art firmament to polish a veneer of youthful credibility and underline the break with a previous generation of politicians[4]. Despite this rapid co-option by the new political

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[2] *The beginning of the 'long boom', which lasted until the economic crash of 2008 dates back to the last years of the Major government.*

[3] *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Things_Can_Only_Get_Better_(D:Ream_song)*

[4] *Many of whom, however, have regained a certain national prominence since the UK's EU referendum in 2016.*

establishment, it did seem to many that after the trials and social dislocations of the 1980s, Britain might indeed be cool again.

Many students who entered planning schools at the end of 1990s and in the early 2000s, took their first steps into adult life and experienced their formative adolescent and student years against this political and cultural background and a soundtrack of home grown indie rock and dance music. The link to the concerns of planning is not as tenuous as it may seem! Much of the music and culture of the time either explicitly, or implicitly, drew on the deep well springs of the 'place-based' experiences of its creators growing-up in the economically ravaged and physically disfigured, towns, cities and regions of 1980s Britain. Some members of the generation channelled this into their music, art and filmmaking, whilst others sought-out a role in a profession that seemed to offer the potential to do something about it all: planning. It certainly seemed for many to be a propitious moment to join its ranks. The change of government had ushered in a modernisation agenda for planning and a host of policy initiatives, processes and ideas – e.g. integrated transport, urban renaissance (Urban Task Force, 1999), the 'new' spatial planning (Haughton, Allmendinger, Counsell, & Vigar, 2010), regional planning (Glasson & Marshall, 2007), social inclusion, 'joined-up thinking', evidence-based policy, to name but a few. For many in the profession these seemed to amount to a positive and exciting programme for planning, which was positioned (once more) as a valued process and sector at the centre of governmental activity. The enthusiasm around planning also infused and enthused planning scholarship and many of those studying planning at the time. This is not to say that there were not some who were confident that they had 'seen all this before', or who argued "*there is no significant difference between spatial planning and town/land use (etc.) planning, and, hence, that this latest term is nothing more than a re-branding of an old activity, albeit one that has itself changed and evolved significantly over the last half century*" (Taylor, 2010: 193). Yet notwithstanding this, and the longstanding concern which exists in the UK as elsewhere about a gap between the theory and practice of planning (Allmendinger, 2009: 20), the historical moment outlined above within which the planners interviewed here were educated, can be viewed as an optimistic/ascendant 'moment' for planning.

10.2 Becoming a Planner in a New Century

The remainder of the Chapter is based on in-depth interviews with a small number of planning graduates from master's level student cohorts at a northern English university between 1997 and 2006 who commenced their professional planning careers during the first decade of the 21st. century. Five individuals were consulted and asked basic information about career destination and more detailed questions about their experience of the transition from planning student to planner (Appendix 1). The main focus is on how well/badly they felt they were prepared, to make the transition from being students to practitioners of planning. All those interviewed studied on planning programmes accredited by the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) which seeks to ensure that curricula are adapted to the needs to

planning practice as well as offering a grounding in the fundamental knowledge, skills and professional competences (including ethical awareness) (Royal Town Planning Institute, 2016 a; Royal Town Planning institute, 2016 b) required to become a professional planner.

The questions provided a general guide for the interviews, but the research approach was very much inspired by the idea of 'giving voice to planning practitioners' (Tasan-Kok et al., 2016), and respondents were encouraged to give and develop accounts 'in their own words'. The approach to presenting the findings similarly seeks to allow the respondents and their words to 'speak for themselves', with themes emerging inductively rather than being through an *a priori* theoretical framework or stance. Broadly inspired by a *phronetic* approach to social inquiry, the emphasis is rather on the 'irreducibility' of the narrative supplied by the five individuals planners in communicating their experience of the transition from planning student to practitioner (Flyvbjerg, 2001). This seems particularly appropriate here as the chapter is focussed on experiences of the transition from being a planning student - inculcated perhaps principally with 'general' principles and "context-independent" knowledge about planning; to, practicing planner - imbued with the "Context-dependent knowledge and experience [which is] at the very heart of expert activity" (Flyvbjerg, 2001: 71). Though based on a small number of cases it is hoped that by adopting the research approach outlined above, the chapter can make a contribution to addressing the 'gap in the literature' in terms of "detailed in-depth" investigations which explicitly seek "*to explore the manner in which contemporary planning practitioners view their role*" (Fox-Rogers & Murphy, 2016: 79 – *added emphases*). All interviewee responses are anonymised but information about the position held by the interviewees and the kind of organisation they work for is provided to aid interpretation.

Effectiveness of planning education received in preparing respondents for life as a practicing planner (or work in a related field)

There was a general feeling that the planning education received had prepared students well for life as a practicing planner, or work in other related (or in one case unrelated) fields. If answering yes, respondents were asked to indicate the ways in which their planning education had been useful and which knowledge or skills had been the most relevant. One interviewee offered the following reflection:

"*It was primarily useful in setting out how a production pipeline, process and procedure take place (i.e. in terms of making a plan, a policy or a decision based on those plans or policies) and how this can be managed, influenced, mediated and maintained, both in terms of substantive issues and the plethora of individuals (professional, political and citizens) and institutions involved*." (Planning Masters and PhD Graduate, Animation Production Manager)

Another respondent indicated that the pursuit of a planning qualification had been part of an already developing career trajectory and brought new skills, which helped them subsequently to find a different kind of work:

"*I undertook a masters in civic design around 2000. I initially graduated in 1991 with a degree in Civil Engineering, in 1994 with a Masters degree in Environmental Civil Engineering and had worked both on site and in design. I decided to go back again to university because I was interested in understanding the processes before a project got to the design and implementation stage and felt that this would ultimately help me get into the field of regeneration.*" (Regeneration Manager, Local Authority)

Asked more specifically if their planning education had helped them subsequently the same respondent replied:

"*Yes, it definitely helped me secure my first job as a project manager. I had had a few interviews for similar jobs before I start the Civic design job but although I had a good interview the feedback was I needed some more relevant experience*."

In terms of skills acquired through undertaking a planning qualification the respondent commented that:

"*As my previous degrees had been in engineering I wasn't used to writing essays or even expressing myself in reports. All my reports had been very technical and so it was useful to learn how to research and write essays. Planning allowed me to look at things more holistically and opened my mind to many different options when my engineering education was much more narrow and black and white!*"

The respondent also noted that there were some areas where the preparation they received might have been better for some aspects of the planning practitioner's work noting *"…it may have helped if we'd had some information on some softer skills such as negotiating skills, running a meeting, managing workloads etc*." and that "*Maybe universities could do a bit more to ensure students are aware of some of these principles*". Another respondent, though stating they generally felt well-prepared for work as a planner, described a sense that they might have been more confident in approaching some of the development control (regulatory) aspects of their work:

"*Initially I wasn't sure if I was prepared, as despite the best efforts of our Development Control lecturer, starting a career in 'DC' (as it was called in Cool Britannia days) was overwhelming, and felt as though I was starting a completely alien career completely unprepared. However, once I'd learnt the DC system 'on the job', it became apparent to me that the broader knowledge gained through a wide ranging and thorough Masters programme all helped to enable me to operate the system from a well informed and considered position.*" (Planning Officer, Local Authority)

Interestingly the same respondent also hinted at the value of a broad-based planning education as opposed perhaps to a more narrow 'skills-training' kind of approach:

"*Over the years compared with a more vocational DC training or faster track academic courses, I have always had the feeling that the broader perspective gained from the Masters has somehow given me a more beneficial position from which to operate the planning system*."

Another respondent (Mineral and Waste Planner, Local Planning Authority) was also positive about the benefits of a broad-based planning education noting that they felt that they could use theory in practice due to the nature of the field they were working in - for example, in relation to consultation and building relationships with communities. This respondent note that the time available in planning processes allowed conflicts to be avoided and they felt they could 'do the job properly' which led them to be 'quite satisfied overall'. The local authority Planning Officer also reflected on aspects of their planning education and the fact that sometimes the benefits of this were clearly felt but rather intangible and hard to precisely define:

"*The only skill that I would say was most relevant is the ability to take on board and balance different views, perspectives and demands. Not sure how the Masters instilled that in me but it did!*" (Planning Officer, Local Authority)

A similar point was raised by another respondent who commented that "*I probably didn't fully realise the importance of some of the modules in particular the economic one as viability forms an important part of my work*".

The wider historical context and changes since the period in which they had studied also had some influence on experiences – notably it seems reduction in budgets and staffing levels. The Local Planning Authority Minerals and Waster Planner thus reflected on how when 'planning was on a high' (which they described as being around 2006) money was available to send people on masters courses (with up to 8 individuals from the local authority where the individual then worked being able to undertake a masters at the same institution as they had). Ten years later the same respondent felt that pressure on time means that some planners moving towards more senior roles did not have the same time as their forebears to offer such opportunities and 'mentoring to new colleagues' and that was a source of frustration for this individual. The Regeneration Manager, in reference to the point made above about the need for more preparation in 'soft' skills also commented that:

"*Although in the old days these types of skills were perhaps skills picked-up once at work on training schemes, many local authorities and consultants have cut back drastically on training in the recent years*."

Although only raised by two respondents there is an interesting emphasis here on the role of ongoing mentoring and training in aiding the transition from planning student to practitioner. There was also – particularly in one case, as sense of frustration that individuals might be constrained in offering the same degree of mentoring support to their junior colleagues today, as they had benefitted from themselves in an earlier period. This speaks to notions of professionalism and 'craft' and the sense of *appartenance* (membership/affiliation) to a professional family, or community, whose members have socially constituted affinities and responsibilities to one another. The other strong theme was that a broadly based planning education might be beneficial in ways that only become apparent later (i.e. whilst transitioning to becoming a practicing planner).

Challenges faced in transitioning from being a planning student to a practicing planner (or working in a related field)

The respondents reported a diverse range of challenges face when transitioning from being a planning student to practicing planner. The respondent who was no longer working in the planning field noted that:

"*The biggest challenge was political - while my planning masters acknowledged the political dimension in terms of locally and nationally reserved planning powers for politicians, there was little critical analysis provided of the execution of these political functions and the broader governance context in which this takes place. This deficiency made negotiating governance contexts quite a daunting challenge in my initial years as a planning practitioner*." (Planning Masters and PhD Graduate, Animation Production Manager)

One respondent also noted that a challenge they had faced was being asked to "*Defend a refusal by politicians having earlier written a report which says consent should be granted*"[5] and added that "*Democratic process can get planners down when they spend so much time explaining things to members*[6] *but often they do not listen*". They also noted that there was "*procedural pressure*" and an emphasis placed on "*meeting targets rather than the quality of the decision*". This was essentially another form of political pressure, as such targets, and associated performance-related inducements such as additional grant support, emerged from the discourse of central government about making planning

[5] *This is the 'classic' professional and ethical challenge faced by planners and other professionals when one's professional opinion is at odds with the course of action/position one is directed to take and defend by one's employer. See Allmendinger (2009: 167) for a discussion of this. The Royal Town Planning Institute's Code of Professional Conduct explicitly states that planners should not make or subscribe to statements which are contrary to their bona fide professional opinion*

[6] *Elected local politicians/councillors often abbreviated to simply 'members' in English usage.*

(and other policy sectors) more efficient and 'enhancing' their performance. The respondent also added that "*Legal challenges lead to a belt and braces approach which can stop people being creative*" as "*You have to work within rules*".

It seems important to distinguish between general experiences of transitioning from life as a student to working life, and the transition from *planning* student to planner. Some of the issues encountered may be experienced across a range of fields as, typically young, adults adapt to a new stage in life. That is not to say that planning education should not be helping to prepare students for this alongside providing more field specific knowledge and skills. Equally, it should be remembered that some planning students may already have experience of having worked (planning continues to be offered as a well-subscribed postgraduate programme so many students may have previous work, or other academic experiences). Thus one respondent (Regeneration Manager) noted that "*As I had already worked for a number of years I didn't really encounter too many problems*". This individual focussed rather on the ongoing issues involved in working life, adding:

"*However, as I mentioned above the main issue is staying up-to-date while working, as due to cut backs at the local authority there isn't really much time or resource for further training. Therefore it really is down to you to try and broaden your experience. If you don't have the right mind-set, it will be difficult to stay motivated, upskill and continue moving on*."

For the Local Planning Authority Planning Officer, though the transition to practitioner was associated with a specific set of challenges, there also seemed to be a clear appreciation of the professional enrichment that a steep-learning curve may also bring. When asked about what were the challenges of starting work as a planner this individual commented "*Learning the detail of the subject matter, in my case initially listed buildings as well as trees, signage and regular domestic properties*" but then added:

"*I was fortunate enough to start my career in a fantastic Georgian/Victorian quarter of an amazing city. Learning the intricacies of listed building features was a steep but exciting learning curve. Why would I ever previously have needed to know that the date of a building could be estimated by the number of panes in its sash window, what a portico is or what on earth 'rustication' was ("vermicular rustication is the one to watch out for", my team manager once said!)?*"

The Minerals and Waste planner provided another interesting perspective based on institutional change and the wider historical context when they had commenced work. They noted that the authority they had been working in and which had sponsored their postgraduate education in planning, was subsequently replaced by new structures. This created a particular context for their evolving career with changes in working practices resulting from such institutional restructuring. For example, they noted

that the "*Pressure to work remotely affects the potential for mentoring*" unlike in "*the old big county council services" in which "a problem could be shared and discussed*". This was seen as "*The end of something, an era?"* Though the respondent also noted that the "*Flipside of the good old Structure Plan days*" was "*too much arguing over minutiae*" so it was "not all good in the old days"! In terms of overcoming the current "*sense of isolation*" that planners may feel (working remotely, sometimes across a number of authorities, and without a surrounding team of colleagues), IT was seen as a potential solution. An online forum has thus been established which is open to any minerals and waste planners across England and Wales.

This respondent also noted that there had been an interplay between the wider planning context (including the policies and reforms mentioned in introduction section), their planning education, and their own experiences of, and feelings about, work. For example, the emphasis placed on 'front-loading' of participation (i.e. participation early in the planning process), which was promoted in the spatial planning system in the mid-2000s tied-in very closely with their own masters dissertation on participatory planning. The respondent talked of a *"Belief in the new system after 2004"* but noted that "*Due to the politics ten years later there is still no Waste and Minerals Plan despite all the effort*" (i.e. at consultation and front-loading of participation etc.) . This led the respondent to reflect a little ruefully that the people who at the time (mid-2000s) had said "*We've seen this all before*" (i.e. in the face of the respondent's optimism and belief in the benefits of front-loaded participation) "*were right*". For this respondent this led to a question "*How can theory be applied in such settings?*" and the insight that "*Theory is reflected in the real world, but can be hard to practice in light of it*".

Most rewarding and/or enjoyable aspects of working in planning practice (or a related field)

The respondents were also asked to comment on what they had found the most rewarding and/or enjoyable aspects of their work. One respondent presented these as a bulleted list:

"…Feeling that I was making a difference;

- *Bringing an evidence based approach to policy making;*
- *Working with like-minded professionals;*
- *Engaging with institutional stakeholders and citizens about their perspectives;*
- *Research;*
- *Generating debate;*
- *Exploring planning in its broadest sense as spatial and not just urban."*

(Planning Masters and PhD Graduate, Animation Production Manager)

This list conveys a strong sense of professional vocation with its emphasis on making a difference, drawing on expertise (i.e. evidence-based policy making; undertaking research), working with stakeholders and citizens, and, a certain sense of professional kinship/identification with other professionals. The Regeneration Manager stated that "*I enjoy the hands on practical work of delivery. I connect people, negotiate, build bridges and solve problems*". 'Job satisfaction' for this individual seems to be centred on engagement in the practical delivery of project work with its associated people-facing and problem-solving dimensions. The emphasis on making a difference and seeing things 'get done' as a result of one's involvement also seemed to motivate the Local Planning Authority Planning Officer who observed:

"*I like to see buildings and places delivered, particularly major schemes and ideally where you can look back confidently and show how they have improved the quality of the environment and people's lives (cheesy I know!).*"

The Mineral and Waste Planner also gained satisfaction from being able to make a wider contribution to the development of the field which they saw as a way to stay engaged, learn from other people and 'put something back' into the field. They added that "*I am passionate about what I do, and I think this is down to having the time to do the job properly*". This allowed reflection on any mistakes made and an opportunity to try to improve future practice. But this respondent also commented *"It is important to try and do a good job, but some people will not have the time to do that"*, noting that in their own role they perhaps had more opportunity to achieve this than planners working in a general Development Management planning team *"who don't often have time due to their case load"*.

Changes to the status of planning and planners in the period since entering planning education and working in planning (or a related field)?

The respondents were also asked to comment on any changes in the status of planning and planners which they had witnessed occurring or had felt since commencing their careers as practicing planners. Here the national and political context and political climate played a role. Thus the respondent who had moved on from working in planning noted that in their national context (Eire):

"Planners are still derided…and are the favoured scapegoat of many politicians when bad planning decisions are made, even though most planning decisions are actually made by politicians, both local and national!" (Planning Masters and PhD Graduate, Animation Production Manager)

Though the individual had moved on from work as a planner, there was a clear sense of annoyance, almost injustice at the way that planners were cast as the foil for unpopular political decisions. But these feelings also arose in the UK context too with the Regeneration Manager (now working slightly to one side of the statutory planning function) noting that:

"*My planning colleagues do unfairly in many instances get blamed by central government and developers for holding things up, being obstructive or placing unrealistic planning conditions on development. I feel that this has undermined the work they do and the general public fail to realise that they follow planning law and guidance to protect our environment.*"

The undermining effect of political discourse which targets planning and the reduction of resources dedicated to the function at local level were also noted by the Local Authority Planning Officer:

"*The clear shift in emphasis in post-recession, National Planning Policy Framework[7] era planning away from place-making towards economic objectives, combined with the era of austerity in local government has had a clear negative impact on what planners are able to achieve, and the scapegoating of the planning system and associated lack of focus on the house builders in the 'housing crisis' remains frustrating despite increasingly frequent acknowledgement to the contrary. The debates…continue to promote an increasingly market-led approach which I consider to be to the detriment of place-making and sustainability.*"

The Minerals and Waste planner also reported a sense of frustration that decisions are "*made by the politicians but planners may be blamed if they are bad*". They also noted that "*Young planners may not feel they have the ability to say no to bad proposals*" and this may be particularly an issue "*if they don't have access to the right guidance, or mentoring*".

10.3. Challenges and opportunities for planning and planners over the coming years and role of planning education received in helping individuals to meet, or make the most of, these.

The respondents were also asked about what they saw as the challenges and opportunities for planning and planners over the coming years and if they felt their planning education might help to meet these. The local authority Regeneration Manager commented that:

[7] *This was adopted in 2012 following a rather controversial drafting process and sets the overall context for planning in England. See - https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2*

"*I see the big challenges as tackling climate change and delivering quality urban environments in a political climate of austerity in which national government attempts to maintain an urban renaissance appear very limited and there appears to be no clear strategy to tackle over-reliance on car use. Support for renewable energy generation also appears to have been watered down to a negligible level.*"

As regards planning education the Local Authority Planning Officer added "*Planning education helps to ensure wider objectives can still be met in more challenging circumstances, but a module on avoiding entrenched cynicism may have been helpful!*". Meanwhile, the Minerals and Waster Planner noted that "*Personal characteristics are quite important*" in terms of how individual approach their working lives. They also returned to their earlier theme about the importance of the overall experience and structuring of the transition from being a planning student to a planning practitioner. In their view the "*Ideal planning service would be graduates doing all the different areas [i.e. of planning work] to get a flavour of different areas of planning*" and give them a *"broader understanding of how the planning system works from writing policy and then interpreting it and using it in practice"*; but they felt "*This doesn't seem to happen any longer*". It was also suggested *"If Local Planning Authorities had a graduate programme which allowed time in each section of the planning service (i.e. policy, development management and enforcement) graduates would be able to put into practice what they had learnt in their planning degree".* This approach could be important to new planners in "*Getting a feel for what their strengths are, being mentored and then mentoring others*".

10.4. Conclusions

Overall, the interviews revealed a mixed experience of the transition from planning student to planner with some key themes emerging. The importance of a broadly based planning education was appreciated by all respondents, with a feeling that this provided significant added-value over a more narrowly-focussed skills and techniques kind of 'training' for planning work. Another theme was that a broadly based planning education might be beneficial in ways that only become apparent later (i.e. whilst transitioning to becoming a practicing planner). There were also areas where the respondents felt the planning education that they had received might have been improved, notably around dealing with some of the more generic skills needed in the workplace (which may of course not be specific to planning work), and providing a more practical focus and guidance on how to deal with the particular challenges of working in a profession like planning which is so exposed to political contexts and power. The context of the particular period in which the respondents made the transition from planning student to planner, also emerged as an important issue in a number of accounts. Institutional changes and budgetary constraints from the mid-2000s onwards had led to phenomena such as smaller planning teams, and fewer opportunities for ongoing mentoring and training in aiding the transition from planning student to practitioner. This was reflected – particularly strongly in one case, in a sense of frustration that individuals might be constrained in offering the same degree of mentoring support to

their junior colleagues today, as they had benefitted from themselves during their own transition from being a planning student to planner in an earlier period. As noted above this seemed to speak to a sense of professionalism and belonging to a professional family, or community, whose members have socially constituted affinities and responsibilities towards one another. The things which the respondents found most enjoyable and rewarding about their work also seemed similarly to be anchored strongly around a sense of professionalism and vocational commitment; the ability to work for and with others to deliver positive change through planning; the opportunity to put into practice skills and learning to achieve this; and, a sense of identification with a wider community of professionals. One respondent also stressed that *specific* personal characteristics are also important in terms of how individuals approach their working lives, emphasising that these may help define the nature of the transition from being a student to employed professional. And it should also be noted that some *general* aspects of the experience of transition described above, might be more experienced by individuals (often young adults) moving from a life of study to one of work. The experience of transitioning from being a planning student to planner may thus be conditioned by more personal and intrinsic, and more generic factors than the nature of planning education received and the characteristics of the planning profession and field in a given context.

Overall, based on the discussions above it would be hard to conclude that '*Things have only got better*' for the planners who were interviewed. And the broader institutional and political and economic contextual shifts since the heady days for planning and progressive public policy described in the introduction have posed a number of challenges. But in and amongst these and related frustrations, the respondents remained broadly positive about their chosen vocation and current role. Encouragingly this seemed to derive from a sense that their planning education (though not perfect) had in general fitted them well for life as a working planner, and a feeling of belonging to professional community of practice which still has a good deal to contribute to (paraphrasing one respondent's words), improving the quality of the environment and people's lives.

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Appendix 1 – Questions

1 -	Do you feel that your planning education prepared you well for life as a practicing planner (or work in a related field)? 1a - If yes in what ways was it useful? Which knowledge or skills were the most relevant? 1b - If no, why? What was lacking from your planning education which would have better prepared you for a life in practice?
2 -	What kinds of challenges did you face in transitioning from being a planning student to a practicing planner (or working in a related field)?
3 -	Which aspects of working in planning practice (or a related field) were the most rewarding and/or enjoyable?
4 -	Do you feel that the status of planning and planners has changed in the period since you entered planning education and have worked in planning (or a related field)? (e.g. in the context of successive critique and reforms of planing and planners; the recent debates on the role of 'experts' in decision making during the EU referendum etc.)